BRTF Preferred Alternative Feedback

Executive Summary

The task of selecting a preferred alternative or creating an integrated preferred alternative for the South Coast Region is a daunting one. I thank you for taking the time to consider my input into this selection process. Based on the details following this summary; I respectfully ask the BRTF to consider taking the following actions at their November 10th meeting in the LAX area:

- Forward proposal 2 as your preferred alternative or create an integrated preferred alternative using the following from the BRTF options
    - Use the MPAs common to all options with the following changes:
        - Remove Long Point SMR (Catalina)
        - Add recreational take of Pelagic finfish to the Farnsworth SMCA by hook and line
        - Move line between Blue Cavern SMR and Bird Rock SMCA closer to shore as proposed by stakeholders
        - Remove Naples SMCA
    - Choose option 3 for Pt Dume area
    - Choose option 2 for Palos Verdes area
    - Choose new option proposed by Norris Tapp in Laguna area (perpendicular to shore from Abalone Point to North end of Woods Cove)
    - Review take and shape of Orange County SMCA areas
    - Choose option 4 for San Diego area with the following changes:
        - Add back the original San Diego Scripps SMCA with current regulations (Per Scripps request letter)
        - Include Tijuana SMCA (from options 1, 2 , and 3)

Analysis of BRTF options by geography

Now that I have stated my executive summary please allow me to tell you the details starting in the north moving southward.

Point Conception area:

Selection of the Pt Conception shape from Proposal 1 in this area is a good choice. This shape captures all habitat replicates excluding soft 200-3000 meters and hard 100-3000 meters which are not available. Inclusion of the Kashtayit SMP appears to add some cross-interest support without a large social-economic cost. A hyphenated name as suggested by DFG feasibility may add to public understanding of this MPA.

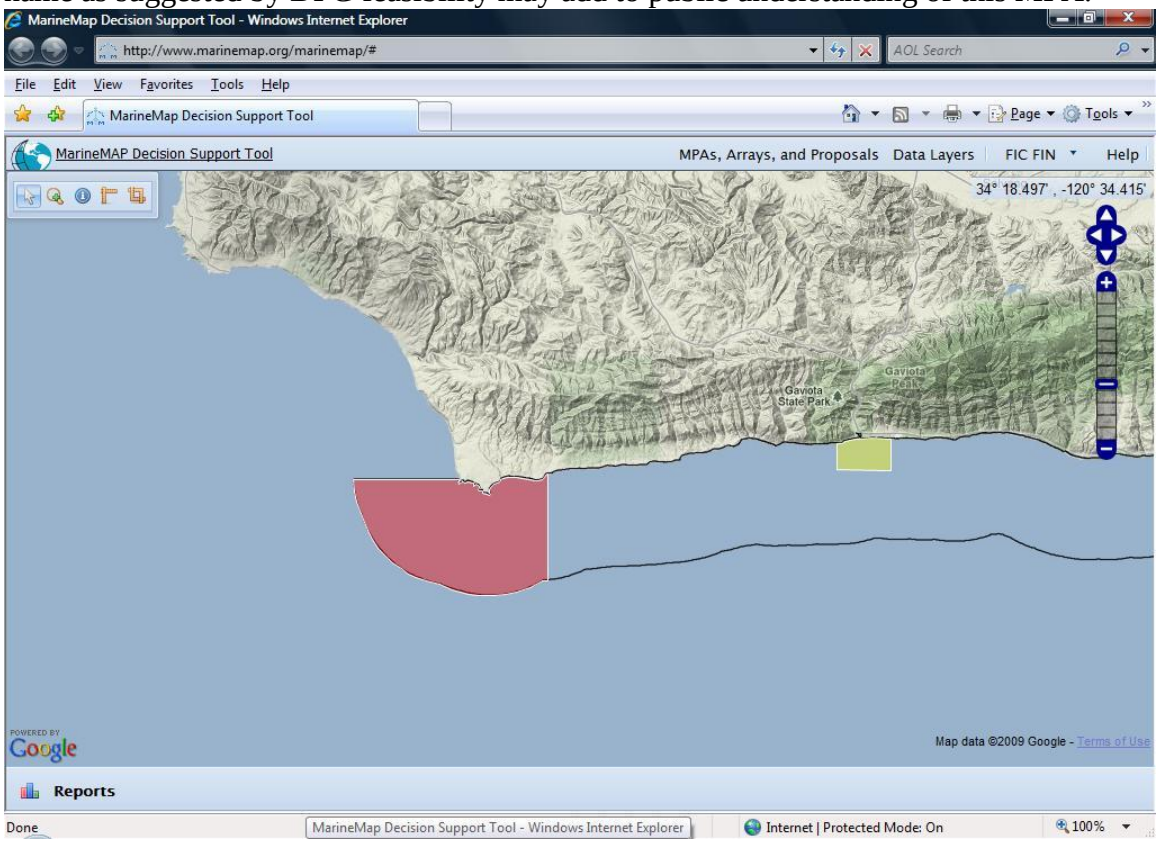

Figure 1: Point Conception SMR and Kashtayit SMP MPAs

UCSB area:

Selection of the Campus Point SMR shape from Proposal 2 and 3 is a good choice for this area. This shape captures all habitat replicates excluding soft 200-3000 meters, hard 30-100 meters, and hard 100-3000 meters which are not available. In addition the Goleta Slough SMR appears to garner cross-interest support at very little cost. Please remove the Naples Reef SMCA per DFG feasibility guidelines or add additional take due to low protection. Adding take of lobster, scallops, and urchin along with spearing of halibut should be considered if this MPA is to remain. Looking at letters submitted for public comment I am concerned the public mistakenly assumes creation of this MPA will stop land development in the area as quoted below:

- "Protection of Naples Reef would extend and advance the entire Naples-Gaviota conservation effort from the land to the sea. A no-take MPA at Naples including the reef, intertidal zone, and harbor seal rookery would complement the critical efforts at Gaviota to preserve the spectacular adjacent blufftop open space from development."

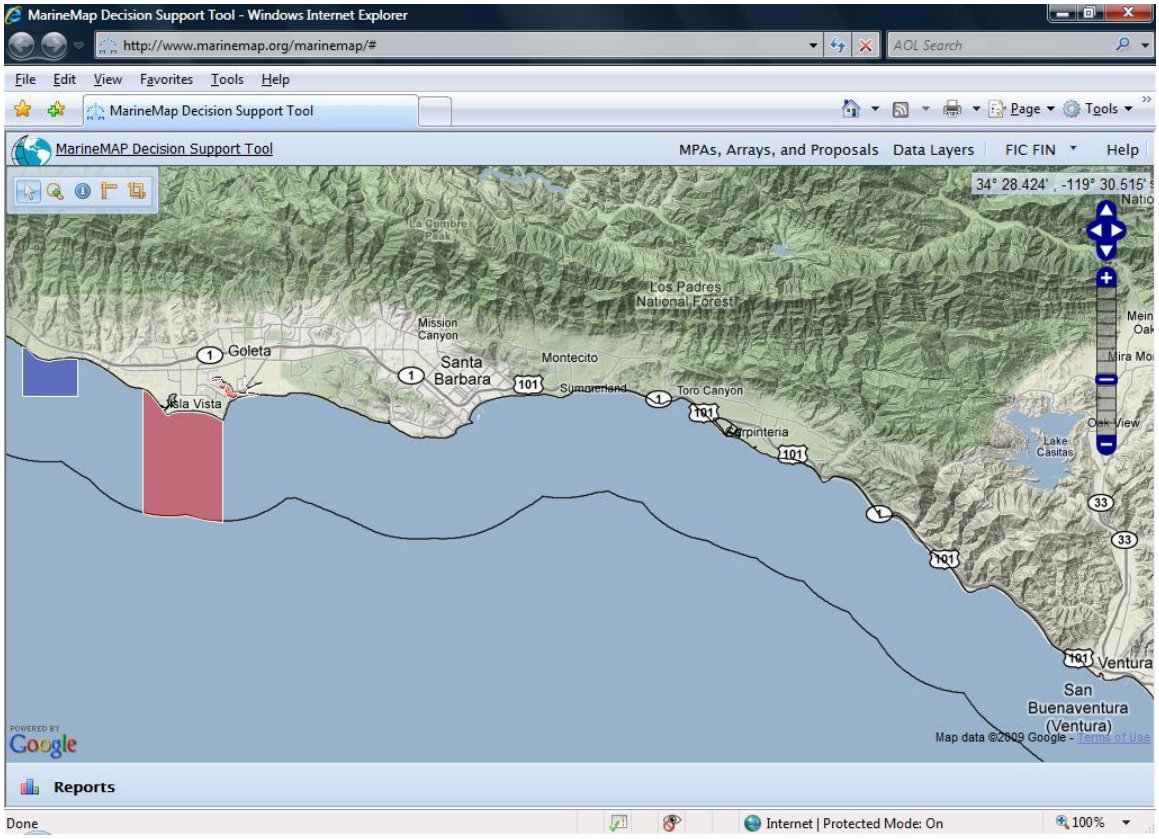

Figure 2: UCSB area MPAs (Naples should allow more take or be removed)

In addition no MPA areas should be added between UCSB and Pt Dume.

Point Dume area:

All three options capture all of the habitat replicates except hard 30-100 meters, which is not available in this area. All three options along with capturing all available habitat replicates also meet all possible habitat spacing criteria from Campus Point. The rationale for picking an option should consider social-economic impacts, stakeholder buy-in, and opportunities for research and monitoring comparisons. Here is my comparison of those considerations:

Social-economic impacts

- All SMCA areas allow the same take thus lessoning their economic impact while providing a high level of protection
- Only option 3 lessens the social impacts as it;
    - Retains easy access for shore/surf fishermen at east end of Zuma beach where there is a long history of this activity with ample public parking. Many long standing surf fishing competitions are held on this beach.
    - Retains easy access from the west to the rocky area at the point for shore based consumptive diving, kayaking, and fishing uses with the same ample public parking.
    - Does not extend past Pt Dume into the sheltered safe areas used by both consumptive and non- consumptive shore based recreational users who dive and kayak in the lee of Pt Dume. Particularly the paradise cove area for consumptive uses.
    - Allows several local residents to use locked access points for consumptive fishing activities by kayaking or diving (What would a Malibu fall party be without fresh caught lobster right outside your backyard?).
    - Retains opportunities for passengers of the new CPFV landing on the Malibu Pier to the area east of Pt Dume.
    - Please note the area east of Pt Dume is DFG district 19A where commercial take is prohibited by trap and seine for the benefit of recreational take. Creating a marine reserve appears contrary to this purpose.
    - Also note Ecotrust aggregated recreational maps for Ventura county show the heavy diving and kayak use of the area east of point Dume

Stakeholder buy-in

- Several studies indicate MPAs work best when stakeholders have buy-in. Option 3 has the most buy-in from the communities directly affected (social-economically) of any option

Research and monitoring comparisons

- Habitats captured in option 3 are contiguous
    - Option 1 splits rocky shoreline, persistent kelp, and hard 30 meter proxy habitats by not capturing them on the west end of the cluster and having only small amounts on the east end with a large distance between
    - Option 2 splits rocky shoreline and persistent kelp habitats in the same manner as above
    - Only option 3 captures replicates in one continual piece which is important in designing MPA areas for the movement of species in those habitats.
- Only option 3 leaves some of the deep canyon habitat open to benthic species fishing for comparison during the monitoring phase. The other options remove benthic fishing opportunities completely thus eliminating a valuable future comparison opportunity.

Option 3 SMCA at Point Dume captures all habitat replicates available efficiently at preferred size and high LOP without causing undue social-economic impacts.

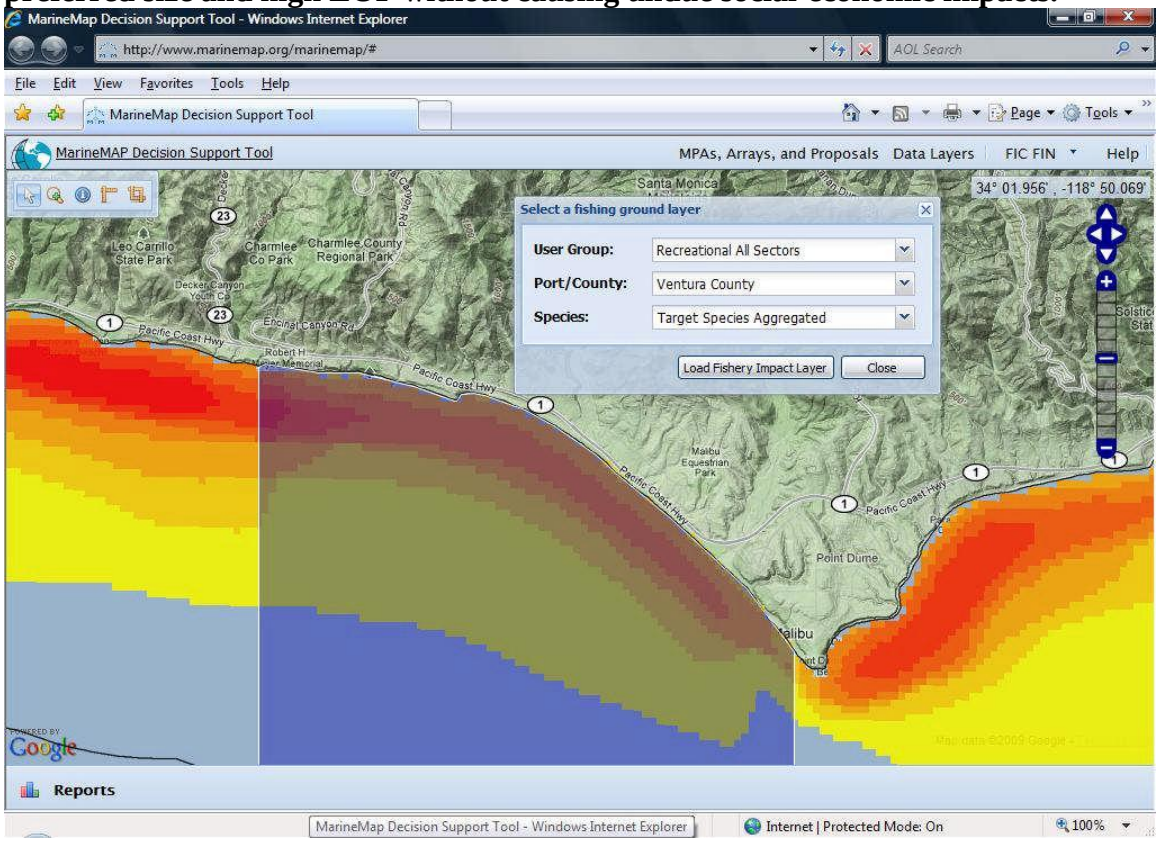

Figure 3: Point Dume recreational usage areas (note heavy use east of Point Dume)

If combined with users from LA county the area east of Point Dume would represent more impacts. Most of this use is from shore based divers/kayakers in this area.

Palos Verdes area:

Meeting SAT guidelines for two habitats requires placing an MPA in this area. Persistent kelp and hard 30-100 meters habitats exist only at Rocky Point and Whites Point in this geography. The SAT has determined placement at Whites Point is not desired due to major water quality and sediment contamination concerns. In addition SAT also acknowledged even when these habitats are captured in this area spacing gaps will exceed guidelines for these habitats. Local harbors and communities have expressed the unacceptable social-economic costs of placing an MPA at Rocky Point. Only option 2 avoids these unacceptable impacts while capturing all habitat replicates except these two in a preferred size MPA cluster. In addition the new Terranea Resort an Eco-friendly destination is located right above the MPA areas this option creates.

The BRTF should consider the following fact on kelp in this area as it relates to this MPA cluster:

- This option captures 2.08 miles of maximum kelp in this cluster which exceeds the 2.04 mile measurement SAT suggested as an equivalent to fill the spacing gap where persistent kelp does not exist just to the south.

A note about spacing:

Please consider the following point as you look at the Palos Verdes shapes. SAT provides guidance on habitat spacing gaps. Currently the maximum spacing gap on the RSG proposals 1 and 2 is the gap between UCSB and Point Dume at about 64 miles.

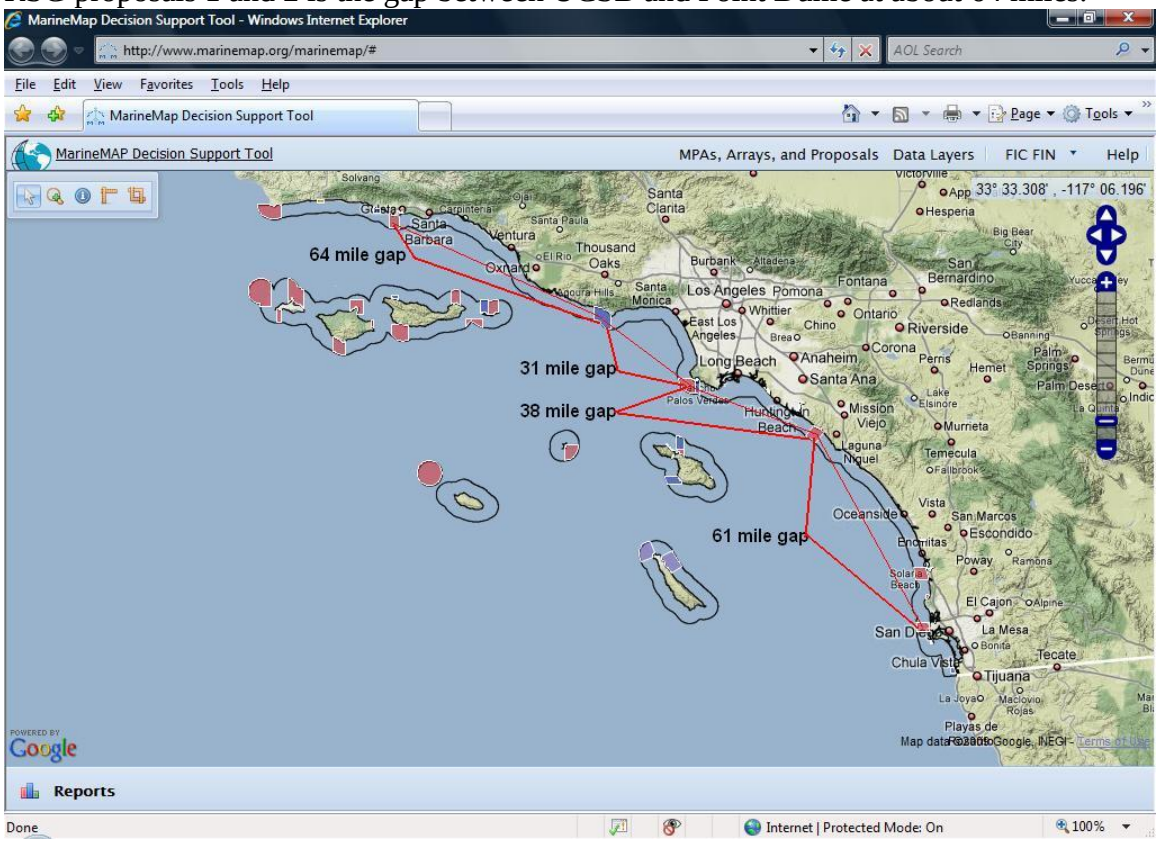

Figure 4: Spacing gaps

The SAT represents this as maximum spacing gaps between habitats. Looking at the figure above you can tell that by removing the PV shapes all together your maximum spacing would be between Pt Dume and Laguna for most habitats. This distance is 69 miles (31 mile gap + 39 mile gap) this is a gain of only 5 miles in spacing in the SAT analysis for most habitats! Is a shape at PV really that necessary?

Laguna area:

This geography has many obstacles to overcome to minimize social-economic impacts and take into consideration the conflicting concerns/desires of Orange County Wastewater District, Laguna City Council, Dana Point and Newport Harbor CPFV and private boaters, Orange County Board of supervisors, and local consumptive/non-consumptive users. A new option has been submitted to the process from Norris Tapp for the Laguna area. This new shape is intended to ease enforcement concerns of the triangular shapes in the current options, avoid the waste water outfall, capture most habitats available in the area, while minimizing social-economic impacts. Two habitats of concern in this area are "combined kelp" and hard 30 meter proxy. The bulk of these habitats are mapped in central Laguna and Dana Point. Placement in central Laguna rather than Dana Point lessens the economic impact in this geography. Again capturing habitat replicates in a contiguous manner while leaving heavily utilized consumptive dive access points at Woods Cove and Moss Street is the goal of this new shape.

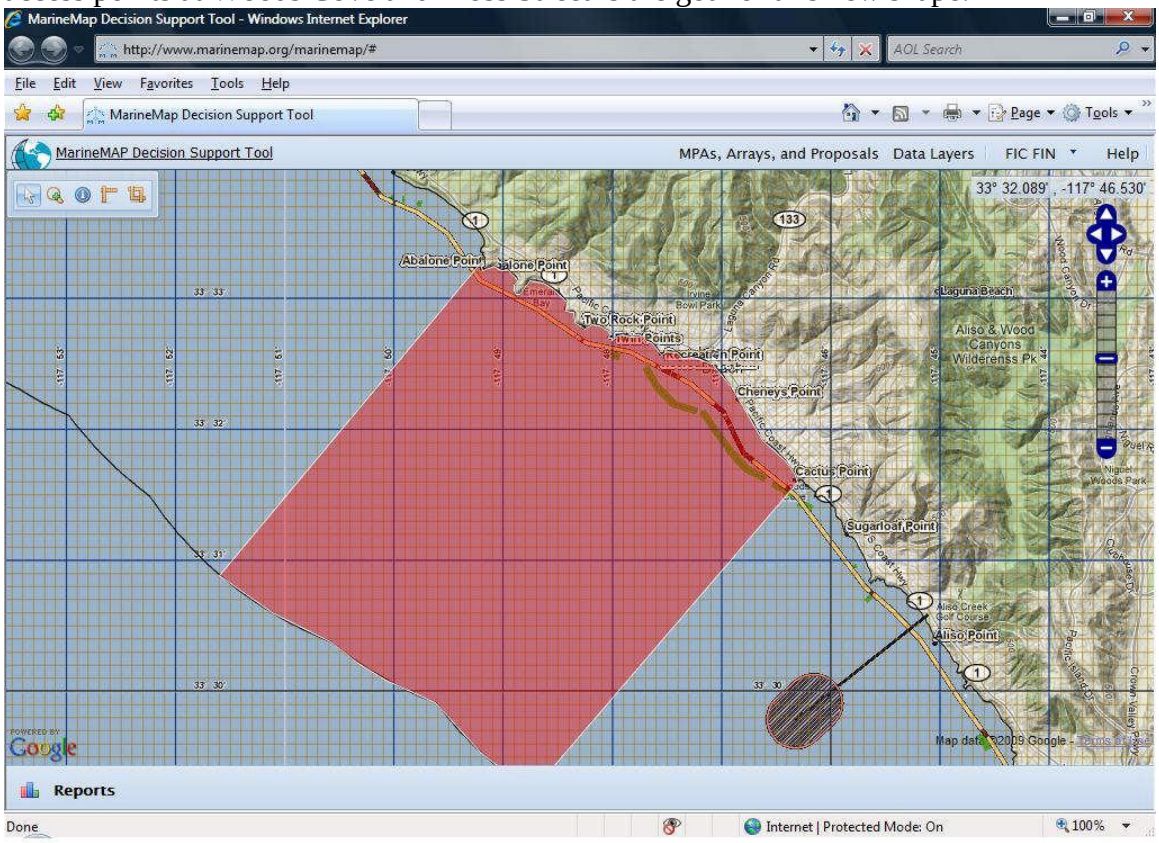

Figure 5: New SMR shape for Laguna

This new shape captures all available habitat replicates in the area except 1.73 miles of 2.04 miles maximum kelp (for "combined kelp") and 1.09 miles of 1.14 miles hard 30 meter proxy. Those amounts are 85% and 95% of the SAT habitat guidelines. This area is also above the SAT minimum area at 12.66 square miles with 3.5 miles of shoreline including a large area of "private" beaches on the north end.

Looking at the figure above you can see capturing additional shallow rock and kelp to meet the replicate guidelines requires extending the boundaries considerable distances for very little amounts of habitat. Local knowledge questions the shallow rock data and close examination of the MarineMap 30 meter proxy line in the area indicates a slight change in the angle or selection would account for the shortage in 30 meter hard proxy. The areas circled in green indicate where rock exists in MarineMap however the 30 meter proxy line seen indicates soft proxy by the tan coloration. In addition kelp which is referenced in other documents as a proxy for shallow reef measures 1.73 miles in this area however shallow rock is only 1.09 miles. To the casual observer it would appear by several indications the shallow rock (hard 30 meter proxy) exists.

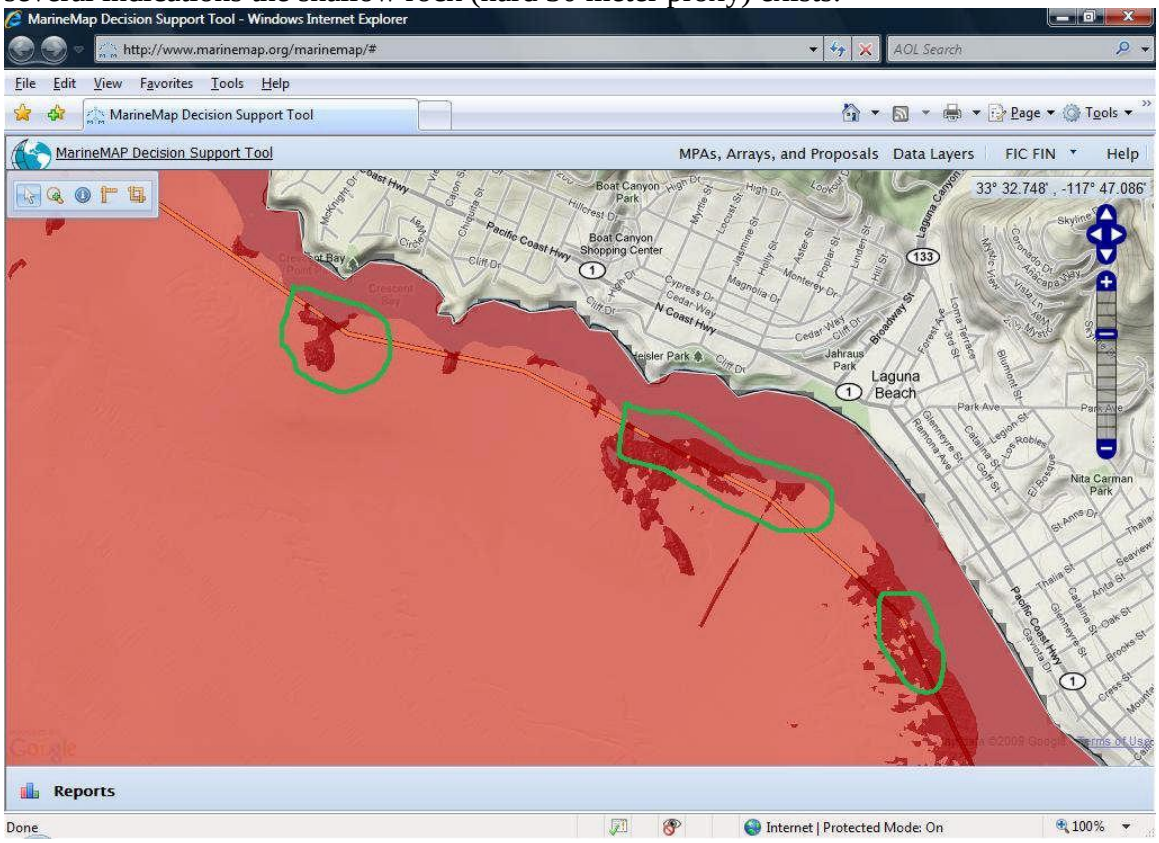

Figure 6: Circled areas represent possible underestimated hard 30 meter proxy

Inter-Tidal protection at Laguna:

Please take into consideration additional impacts to fisheries that would occur by limiting take in the SMCA areas along this stretch of coastline. Since these area extend almost a mile from shore as drawn in the current options additional take considerations may be needed. Protection of the tide-pool areas is very valuable to the local communities and fisheries. However unintended consequences could arise from incorrect take regulations. Bolsa Chica and Upper Newport Bay options are OK however recreational take of lobster might be a consideration in Newport bay due to boundary changes.

San Diego County area:

Addition of the Batiquitos Lagoon SMR to the common shapes gained the missing habitat replicate for eelgrass while still allowing current hook and line fishing to occur under the I-5 bridges. The only option to capture all of the SAT habitat replicates in San Diego County is BRTF option 4. This option also has the least amount of social-economic impact of all of the options and is consistent with the public comment from the La Jolla Town Council and the WindandSea Master Plan adopted by the city of San Diego. It also maintains the current shape of the La Jolla ecological reserve that has been in existence for 38 years. Heavy local support for the current shape exists in artwork, signage, publications, and buoy markers. One omission is the current San Diego Scripps SMCA with current regulations of invertebrate protection should be added as Scripps requested. Consideration of the new shapes and regulations in options 1, 2, and 3 would cause significant initial costs and impact the current users of this area dramatically for little conservation gain. I do agree that adding the Imperial Beach SMCA option as configured may provide some research opportunities with minimal social-economic impacts.

I feel option 4's Del Mar/Sunset Cliffs solution for this area is best for these reasons:

- It captures all the habitat replicates available in this area including the very rare deep rock. The other options do not capture this deep rock habitat which many of the benthic species on the likely to benefit list.
- It used a creative concept to create the Point Loma SMR/ Ocean Beach Pier SMCA cluster in north Point Loma. I believe a Point Loma MPA best fits the goals and SAT guidance because:
    - Historically kelp in this area has proven to be more persistent than in La Jolla (I presented this information as public comment at the prior BRTF meeting)
    - SAT guidance in the recent kelp answer document states Mexico is an artificial southern boundary and due to current flow MPAs further south are recommended.
    - This MPA cluster is a creative solution to get very high protection and still allow pier fishing with easily recognized boundaries on shore and from a vessel. In addition it does not impact DoD activities that occur in south Point Loma on a regular ongoing basis.
    - Though not shown in Marine Map I know large areas of Elk Kelp exist in this area. This is also mentioned in chapter 4 of the SAT evaluations methods document.
    - Impacts to San Diego commercial and recreational fisheries though high do not have the additional heavy use by recreational kayakers and divers as seen in La Jolla due to difficult access down steep cliffs and unprotected ocean swells.
    - I also contacted city beach parks and they stated this MPA does not conflict with their mission statement for the extensive city park areas along this section of coastline.

- Del Mar is actually a unique and valuable habitat, and included in proposal 2's network because:
    - It contains very rare key habitat of hard 100-3000 meters
    - There are deep water pinnacles, an underwater canyon headland which creates a deep upwelling zone, and continual reef structure areas from very deep to shallow waters.
    - ROV studies on rockfish show large schools of Boccaccio one of the four species listed as recovering in the PFMC management plan. In addition Cowcod another species on the overfished list, populate this area. Photos are included in the PPT I presented at the RSG meeting along with the kelp information mentioned above.
    - Areas this deep with this structure and upwelling currents that support these large numbers of benthic species of concern are exactly what the act, when passed, was intended to protect.
    - I will express a concern that beach replenishment and grooming along with lagoon dredging is extremely important to the city of Del Mar. They need SOLID formal written documentation that steps will be taken to insure these activities are allowed to continue. Without this concern being addressed the city will oppose any MPA along its coastline.

I feel the other options are not the best solution for the following reasons:

- The La Jolla SMR options I believe have several issues:
    - Repeatedly the RSG heard in public testimony that consumptive kayakers and divers flock to La Jolla. Though members of this work group sincerely considered the needs of these stakeholder groups in their design they may not have been aware how displacement or other fisheries would impact them. Since I am intimately familiar with this area I know that all sectors fish this area frequently. Even without a closure the area becomes crowded along the point. White sea bass and yellowtail are hot targets along with thresher sharks. This spring I was one of 50+ boats trolling for threshers off the point when they showed up. This time of the year lobster buoys dot the entire La Jolla coastline. Displacing the CPFV boats, Private boats, and kayakers all dodging lobster buoys into 50% of the current fished area not only creates a major safety hazard but a major mess leading to even more impact to the area.
    - The act calls for MPA areas to be in as undisturbed condition as possible by humans. Placement of this SMR between the major fishing grounds and the harbor will necessitate a multitude of daily boat crossings; this appears contrary to the goals of the act.
- In addition the Swami's SMCA I believe may have the following issues:
    - San Elijo State Park has a campground that has 177 spaces and day use parking. The website lists fishing as one of the attractions. The video states over 90% of the people visiting the campground are families that return year after year. The allowance of only spear-fishing only pelagic species may not coincide with the parks definition of fishing as an attraction?

- The south boundary line crosses the buffer zone of the outfall pipe. Currently negotiations to increase the output at this location are underway with the city of Escondido. Placement of this MPA may add additional requirements.
- Current SMCA inter-tidal protections in Encinitas though popular unfortunately do not have the local enforcement, docents, or research investments of the Orange County coastline. I must conclude that retaining these areas would not contribute to protecting the inter-tidal areas.

In addition the shapes for Famosa Slough and Cabrillo contained in the common options are good choices and should be included in the proposed alternative.

Catalina Island area:

Catalina is currently represented in the MPAs common to all options. I feel the SMCA to protect invertebrates proposed is OK however the shape in Proposal 1 may perform the protection needed in a more feasible manner. Please explore this option in your selections. The Cat Harbor SMCA, Lovers Cove SMCA and Casino Point SMR shapes and regulations are very good choices for local residence and visitors. I have concerns over the movement of the line separating the Bird Rock SMCA and the Blue Cavern SMR. Moving this further from shore could impact persons entering the Two Harbor area with gear deployed. This seemingly small boundary shift may cause great public confusion with deployed gear while transiting the area to gain entrance to Two Harbors.

The allowed take in the Farnsworth SMCA is concerning to me. The island residence and several visitors value the pelagic species that gather around this area. Take has been included for trolling only for Marlin, Yellowtail, Tuna, and Dorado. However fishing practices for these species employ a combination of trolling and live bait hook and line techniques. I am concerned that a person trolling upon getting a strike will stop the boat and deploy live bait hook and line gear thus breaking the law.

San Nicolas Island area:

- San Nicolas Island and Begg Rock are in the Mid Channel Islands sub-bioregion therefore no habitat replicates are needed to meet SAT guidelines. The BRTF option provides valuable conservation value at minimal social-economic impact. Begg Rock's remote location affords minimal human disturbance thus adding to the conservation value.

Conclusion:

I look forward to a fair and honest conclusion to this process. I am however skeptical as this is the first time we have done this and do believe in cautious optimism and start small meeting the science guidelines as much as possible. There is time to adapt as these areas mature in the future.

Thank you for your time;

Respectfully
Joe Exline (“Big” Joe)